

What Is Claimed Is:

1. An automatic loader for a foam pellet cleaning system including a pellet propeller, the automatic loader comprising:

a vertically mounted, tubular-shaped multiple pellet reservoir having an entrance port at its top end, an exit port on its lower end, and an opening proximate the exit port; and

a L-shaped crank pivotally mounted between the exit port and the proximate opening, the crank having a first end operable to block discharge of a pellet from the exit end of the reservoir, and a second end operable for intrusion into the proximate opening; such that pivotal operation of the crank causes the first end to unblock the exit end of the reservoir allowing discharge of a pellet from the reservoir into the pellet propeller, while simultaneously intruding the second end into the proximate opening to prevent premature discharge of a second pellet from the exit end into the propeller.
2. The automatic loader of claim 1, wherein the crank is operated by pneumatic pressure.
3. The automatic loader of claim 1, wherein the cleaning pellets are stacked in the reservoir in an end-to-end fashion.
4. A method for operating an automatic pellet loader for a foam pellet cleaning system having a pellet launcher, the method comprising the steps of:

filling a cleaning pellet dispenser with a plurality of pellets, the dispenser having a pivotal crank adjacent its dispensing end;

actuating the crank to permit one pellet at a time to be dispensed from the dispenser upon command; and

loading a dispensed pellet into the launcher of the cleaning system.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the crank is operated by pneumatic pressure.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the crank is operated by fluid pressure.

7. A system for cleaning interior passages of fluid carrying tubing using foam pellets comprising a vertically mounted pellet retaining sleeve having an entrance port at its top end, an exit port on its lower end, and an opening proximate the exit port; an L-shaped crank having a first projection on one end which blocks discharge of a pellet from the exit end of the sleeve, a second projection on an opposite end and a pivot point disposed therebetween, the crank being operable mounted between the exit end of the sleeve and the proximate opening; and a pellet propulsor which accepts a pellet from the sleeve and urges movement of the pellet through the tubing to be cleaned, whereby operation of the crank causes the first projection to unblock the exit end of the sleeve allowing movement of a pellet from the sleeve into the propulsor for propulsion through the tubing, while inserting the second projection into the proximate opening thereby preventing premature movement of a second pellet into the propulsor.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the crank is operated by a pneumatic cylinder and ram arrangement.

9. The system of claim 7, wherein the crank is operated by fluid pressure.

10. The system of claim 7, wherein the pellet is propelled by fluid force.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the fluid force is pneumatic pressure.

12. A method for cleaning interior passages of fluid carrying tubing using one or more automatically loaded foam cleaning pellets, the method comprising the steps of:

filling a reservoir of a pellet launcher with a plurality of cleaning pellets, the reservoir having a pivotal crank which permits one pellet at a time to be dispensed upon command;
actuating the crank to automatically load a pellet into the launcher; and
launching the pellet into the interior passageway to be cleaned.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of actuating the crank comprises using pneumatic pressure.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of actuating the crank comprises using fluid pressure.

15. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of launching the pellet comprises using pneumatic pressure.

16. The method of claim 12, wherein the step of launching the pellet comprises using fluid pressure.